

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

EURE-00 MED-02 HEW-04 OES-06 /071 W

-----271730Z 070386 /45

P R 271630Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3560

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 1296

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMED PDIP PFOR UR US

SUBJECT: SOVIET RESPONSE TO EMBASSY'S NOTE ON WATER CONTAMINATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DCM WAS CALLED IN TO MFA TO RECEIVE ORAL RESPONSE TO EMBASSY NOTE OF JAN 7 ON CONTAMINATED MOSCOW DRINKING WATER. READING MFA STATEMENT, U.S.A. DEPT. DEP CHIEF KOMPLEKTOV DEFENDED QUALITY OF WATER AND ACCUSED EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND U.S. PRESS OF "SLANDEROUS, PROVOCATIVE CAMPAIGN" TO DISCREDIT GOOD NAME OF MOSCOW. STATEMENT ADDED THAT SUCH BEHAVIOR POISONED ATMOSPHERE OF RELATIONS AND IT INSISTED THAT SUCH INADMISSABLE BEHAVIOR STOP IMMEDIATELY. AGREEING TO FORWARD STATEMENT TO WASHINGTON, DCM TOLD KOMPLEKTOV IT WAS UNACCEPTABLE ON BASIS OF BOTH FACTS AND UNFOUNDED REMARKS MADE IN TEXT. KOMPLEKTOV SAID HE DID NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF DOBRYNIN RAISING MATTER AT HIGH LEVEL IN WASHINGTON. EMBASSY SUGGESTS SUCH A DOBRYNIN CALL WOULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND SOVIETS OF THEIR UNRESPONSIVENESS ON MICROWAVE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF TEXT OF NON-PAPER HANDED DCM BY KOMPLEKTOV FOLLOWS: BEGIN TEXT: ON JAN 7 OF THIS YEAR THE U.S. EMBASSY SENT TO THE MFA OF THE USSR
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A NOTE, IN WHICH IT WAS ASSERTED THAT IN THE WATER OF THE DRINKING WATER SYSTEM IN TWO BUILDINGS, WHERE EMPLOYEES OF THE EMBASSY LIVE, TOXIC SUBSTANCES-- CYANIDE AND MERCURY--WERE CONTAINED IN AMOUNTS WHICH HAD EXCEEDED PERMISSIBLE LEVELS.
IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN THAT APPROPRIATE SERVICES CAREFULLY SEE TO IT THAT THE DIFFERENT COMPONESTS OF

THE ENVIRONMENT IN MOSCOW STRICTLY CORRESPOND TO SAFE MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS. THIS RELATES ALSO TO THE WATER OF THE WATER SYSTEM, THE CONTENTS OF WHICH IN MOSCOW MEET THE VERY HIGHEST QUALITATIVE NORMS. NONETHELESS, CONSIDERING THE ESPECIALLY SERIOUS CHARACTER OF THE CLAIM CONTAINED IN THE EMBASSY'S NOTE, THE RESPONSIBLE SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS CARRIED OUT A SUPPLEMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE WATER IN THE REGIONS MENTIONED IN THE NOTE. AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION SHOWED THE UNFOUNDED NATURE OF THE EMBASSY'S ALLEGATION CONCERNING THE DANGER TO HEALTH OF THE DRINKING WATER--WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY THE AMERICAN SIDE ITSELF WAS FORCED TO ADMIT.

WE CANNOT REGARD ALL THIS AS A SIMPLE MISUNDERSTANDING, CONSIDERING HOW OFFICIAL AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND U.S. PRESS ORGANS HAVE CONDUCTED THEMSELVES IN THIS MATTER. WITH THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE U.S. EMBASSY, A SLANDEROUS PROVOCATIVE CAMPAIGN, DISCREDITING THE GOOD NAME OF THE SOVIET CAPITAL, HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN THE AMERICAN PRESS AND AMONG THE FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES IN MOSCOW.

IT SHOULD BE PERFECTLY CLEAR, THAT SUCH UNWORTHY BEHAVIOR--AND NOT ONLY IN THIS CASE--OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EMBASSY AND OF THE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IS CAPABLE ONLY OF POISONING THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES.

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WARNS (PREDUPREZHDAET) OF THE INADMISSABILITY OF SUCH ACTS AND INSISTS ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THEIR IMMEDIATE CESSATION. END TEXT. RUSSIAN TEXT WILL BE POUCHED TO EUR/SOV.

3. DCM TOLD KOMPLEKTOV THAT THE STATEMENT WOULD OF COURSE BE FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON BUT HE FOUND THE ALLEGATIONS EITHER INACCURATE OR GROSSLY DISTORTED, AND THE TONE AND INFERENCES TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. DCM THEN RECOUNTED CHRONOLOGY OF WATER CONTAMINATION INCIDENT, STRESSING THAT EMBASSY NOTIFIED MINISTRY IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF LABORATORY REPORT INDICATING THAT SAMPLES TAKEN PREVIOUSLY FROM TWO APARTMENT HOUSES HAD EXHIBITED EXCESSIVE AMOUNTS OF TOXIC CHEMICALS; AT SAME TIME AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF BUILDINGS WERE NOTIFIED OF LABORATORY FINDINGS, WHICH WAS CLEAR OBLIGATION ON OUR PART. UNTIL TODAY'S NOTE, NO REPLY HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM SOVIETS TO OFFICIAL REQUEST TO CHECK WATER SUPPLY IN THESE BUILDINGS, BUT WE HAD TAKEN FURTHER SAMPLES AND SUBSEQUENTLY WERE INFORMED THAT THESE SAMPLES MET NORMAL STANDARDS, WHEREUPON WE HAD IMMEDIATELY NOTIFIED

BOTH MINISTRY AND THE AMERICAN RESIDENTS IN QUESTION. ALTHOUGH IN THEORY THE INITIAL SAMPLES COULD HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED, IT IS AT LEAST EQUALLY PLAUSIBLE THAT THEY INDICATED A TEMPORARY CONTAMINATION OF THE WATER SUPPLY. PRESS STORIES ON THE MATTER APPEARED MORE THAN A WEEK AFTER AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF THE BUILDINGS WERE NOTIFIED, AND GIVEN THE CLOSE-KNIT AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN MOSCOW, IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THAT THIS NOTIFICATION EVENTUALLY CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF SOME AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS. A PROMPT REPLY TO THE EMBASSY'S NOTE OF JAN 7 MIGHT HAVE ENDED THE QUESTION BEFORE THE PRESS LEARNED OF IT, BUT IN ANY EVENT, THE EMBASSY HAD DONE NOTHING WHATEVER TO PUBLICIZE THE MATTER.

4. DCM THEN REMINDED KOMPLEKTOV THAT EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN EXHIBITING AS YET UNEXPLAINED LYMPHOCYTOSIS, WHICH MAKES HEALTH OF OUR STAFF A HIGHLY SENSITIVE ISSUE. CONFIDENTIAL

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AS YET OUR EFFORTS TO SECURE COOPERATION OF SOVIET AUTHORITIES IN DETERMINING THE CAUSE OF THIS CONDITION HAVE RECEIVED NO RESPONSE. (COMMENT: SUBSEQUENTLY IN CONVERSATION, KOMPLEKTOV DID PROVIDE REPLY TO OUR REQUESTS--SEPTEL.) IN SUM, DCM STATED THT HE SAW NO GROUNDS WHATEVER FOR SOVIET PROTEST, EVEN THOUGH HE REGRETTED PUBLICITY GIVEN MATTER, WHICH HAD DEVELOPED BEYOND OUR CCONTROL.

5. KOMPLEKTOV SAID SOVIET STATEMENT WAS NOT MATTER OF "REMARKS" BUT WAS AN OFFICIAL COMMENT ON MATTER. DCM SAID THAT THIS MADE IT ALL THE MORE UNACCEPTABLE. KOMPLEKTOV SAID THAT "IT COULD NOT BE EXCLUDED" THAT AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN MIGHT TAKE MATTER UP AT HIGH LEVEL IN WASHINTON.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3561

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 1296

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BOTH TONE AND WORDING OF SOVIET PROTEST ARE CLEARLY INACCURATE AND UNACCEPTABLE, WE MUST POINT OUT THAT THIS MATTER WAS NOT WELL HANDLED FROM WASHINGTON. THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIRST TEXT RESULTS WAS CONVEYED TO THE EMBASSY CASUALLY AND WITHOUT GUIDANCE REGARDING THE POSSIBLE MEDICAL IMPLICATIONS. GIVEN THE INFORMATION RECEIVED, THE EMBASSY HAD NO ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NOTIFYING SOVIETS OFFICIALLY AND ADVISING AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF THE BUILDINGS IN QUESTION. SUBSEQUENT PRESS GUIDANCE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SAMPLES MAY HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED HAS NEVER BEEN ADEQUATELY EXPLAINED. GIVEN THE QUESTIONS WHICH REMAIN REGARDING THE HEALTH CONDITIONS IN MOSCOW, THE SEVSITIVITY OF THIS SUBJECT WITH THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES, AND THE INTENSE PRESS INTEREST IN THE SITUATION, WE WOULD HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE MATTERS OF THIS NATURE COULD BE HANDLED WITH MORE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND MORE PROMPT AND INFORMATIVE ADVICE TO THE EMBASSY.

7. SHOULD DOBRYNIN CHOOSE TO RAISE THIS QUESTION WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT IN ADDITION TO REITERATING FACTS OF SITUATION, THE OCCASION BE USED TO POINT OUT FORCEFULLY THAT THE HEALTH OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS IN MOSCOW REMAINS A PROBLEM AND THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO OUR REQUESTS TO TERMINATE THE MICROWAVE RADIATION DIRECTED AT THE EMBASSY.
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Message Attributes

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TAGS: AMED, PDIP, PFOR, UR, US
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vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/67c138d0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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